

Following the new hazardous waste regulations, the Department of Health published Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe Management of Healthcare Waste. Seeking to implement a waste segregation system in line with the guidance, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust formed a waste management group in September 2006 to manage the project as a steering group.

The trust's environmental manager, Jen Goode, explained: "The group was to decide the waste policy, a timescale for implementation, the communications strategy and training methods. Members included the board director responsible for facilities, staff from infection control, procurement, support services (covering domestics and porters), risk, communications, and lead nurses."

The guidance calls for waste segregation into four distinct receptacles/bags: yellow, orange, yellow and black (known as tiger stripe), and black.

"Procurement contacted a number of NHS PASA approved waste bin suppliers so that a selection of bins could be trialled," said Jen. "When they were first delivered we looked at them for their suitability, ease of cleaning, whether you needed

"three hands" to actually take out the waste bag, etc. Even at this early stage we immediately discarded one front-opening bin, refusing to put it on the wards, as the catch was dangerous and could trap

fingers.

"We asked two busy wards to use and abuse the bins for two weeks and provide feedback. Nurses were tasked to comment on ease of everyday use on the wards, while domestics were asked to comment on the ease of cleaning and emptying of the various bins. Each ward was given four different bins from four different companies.

"We took their feedback and chose Environmental Hygiene Products," said Jen.

Completing the feedback from Prescott Ward, sister Sharon Cornwell reported: "Environmental Hygiene

Trust's colourful solution to safe management of healthcare waste

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is one of the first in the country to implement HTM 07-01. The trust's environmental manager, Jen Goode, told Hospital Bulletin how the project was handled



So quiet: sister Helen Harding said that some of the bins they trialled were terrible

Products wins with us 100%, they have self-closing lids, the foot pedal is easy to use and they're a practical size."

When *Hospital Bulletin* visited Prescott Ward, sister Helen Harding said: "Some of the bins were terrible - so noisy they disturbed patients during the night. These from Environmental Hygiene Products are so quiet. Lightness is also important for the nurses and domestic staff. These bins have handles and wheels making them easy to manoeuvre and domestics found them easy to clean and empty."

The bins were also trialled on Woodmancote Ward, where sister Andrea James said: "Staff



Clear message: the colour coded lids also have helpful pictograms

generally found the Environmental Hygiene Products bins easier to use for emptying - if they've been busy, night staff may need to empty the bins, so this was an important consideration.

"One of the other bins rocked when you stood on the pedal, and you had to pull it down to get the waste bag out of the front - it was cumbersome."

And how have staff and visitors taken to the new system?

"With their colour-coded lids the bins are so distinctive, said Andrea. "All staff have been trained and put the right waste in the

right bin instinctively now. Visitors, seeing the bright lids and stickers, realise we're segregating waste and ask us if they're unsure where their waste should go."

Domestics supervisor, Lorraine O'Rahilly, of Initial Hospital Services, said: "The new bins are easy to use and unload, the wheels make them easy to move, and they're easy to clean."

Environmental Hygiene Products (EHP) recommended the trust purchase white-bodied bins with the appropriate number of colour coded lids to ensure flexibility - if requirements alter over time the lid can simply be changed.

"During the assessment our original estimate of what we would need sizewise and colourwise did change to fit ward requirements, but EHP was very flexible and helpful," explained Jen. "For example we found that in practice the wards required far more of the smaller 20litre bins.

"We placed a block order



Tiger stripe: these distinctive bins are for offensive hygiene waste such as incontinence pads and nappies

then revised it during the delivery process."

The order covered EHP's 20litre small removable body bin, 50litre medium removable body white bins, and 70litre large front openers for easy removal of the larger waste sack. Each size was supplied with orange and tiger stripe lids as required.

The purchase of the bins was centrally funded for the new tiger stripe and orange bins, with the wards and departments using existing bins for the black ones or buying from their own budget as necessary. Any of the existing yellow bins that were in relatively good condition were painted black and returned to the ward. "It's saved money and is obviously better for the environment as we are not disposing of bins that are in good working order," explained Jen.

The scheme covers the trust's Gloucestershire Royal and Cheltenham General, and Delancey Assessment and Rehabilitation Hospital. The initial plan was for delivery to be phased over an eight-week period. However, as delivery progressed EHP



Sort it out: the trust-wide changeover was well communicated

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Easy removal: nurses and domestic staff found the new bins easy to use

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arranged for the final 60% to be delivered to a local warehouse from where two of its team went round the wards as required. EHP took all the pallets and packaging away for recycling.

Every ward and department has a waste management coordinator who attended a training session and was then tasked to cascade the training down to their staff, and advise how many bins and of what size and colour were required. Each completed a schedule of their requirements that detailed the precise location of each bin. Completing the sequence, they signed these schedules as their bins were delivered.

Jen ran the training programme - explaining the legislation and the HTM, trust procedures on segregation, and an exercise in which the waste management coordinators had to complete a floor plan indicating where the various colour coded bins should go. They were also asked to look at the potential implementation in their area, for example: did they have enough space for the bin in the dirty utility area?

To avoid the confusion that could have arisen from a gradual changeover to the new system, the trust implemented "SORT IT OUT DAY". In a well-publicised and carefully coordinated scheme, the whole trust changed to the new scheme for waste segregation at 11am on February 28th, 2007.

All waste management coordinators were provided with a resource pack with posters, stickers, and orange and tiger stripe bags. On the day, in conjunction with cleaning staff, the waste management coordinators removed all the yellow bags from their areas replacing them with orange ones, and also put posters on bin lids and walls.

The trust's communications

team organised the high impact posters and put together the resource pack. All around the trust pictogram-style posters and bin lid stickers advise the typical contents that should be placed in each colour coded bin - giving the scheme more visual impact and assisting those for whom English is not their first language.

"An external agency is now implementing an audit on the waste segregation project as we thought we'd benefit from an independent view," explained Jen. "Overall the project has gone well. It's helped ensure our waste is correctly segregated and gives us the confidence that we are disposing of it in a safe and responsible manner while meeting the requirements of the legislation."



Teamwork: Jen Goode with Andrea James, sister on Woodmancote ward

And on the choice of bins? "We decided not to take the cheap option - but we win in other areas," explained Jen. "Technology and expectations have moved on. No-one wants a bin that's difficult to move and empty, hard to clean, damages the walls and wakes patients when the lids clang shut in the middle of the night."

One of the first trusts to implement the new waste segregation scheme, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is reaping the benefits with a better environment for patients, easier waste handling, improved hygiene and enjoying the cost benefits of segregated waste disposal.

As part of the trust's shared services contract, Jen is now working with Gloucestershire PCT's head of health, safety and environment, Mark Parsons, on its implementation of the scheme.



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